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SUBJECT: CELLOU DIALLO ANNOUNCES CANDIDACY FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

¶1. (U) In a press conference on November 17, former Prime Minister Cellou Diallo formally announced that he intends to run for president in 2010. Previously a member of the ruling Party for Unity and Progress (PUP), Diallo assumed leadership of the Union Force Democratic Guinean (UFDG) opposition political party just over a year ago. He announced his candidature during a public celebration of his one year anniversary as party president. Diallo is the first political leader to declare his candidacy for the 2010 presidential elections.

¶2. (U) According to a local internet news site (Kababachir.com), Diallo also stated that President Lansana Conte will not run for reelection in 2010. During the last presidential election, Diallo finished in second place with about 20% of the national vote. (COMMENT. There has been much speculation as to whether Conte will run for another term, but neither he nor the ruling PUP have indicated one way or the other. END COMMENT).

BIO NOTES

¶3. (U) Cellou Diallo served as prime minister of Guinea from December 2004 to April 2006. Between 1996 and 2004, he served in a number of ministerial positions including as Minister of Transport, Telecommunications and Tourism; Minister of Infrastructure; Minister of Public Works and Transport; and Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture. Diallo was dismissed as prime minister over a controversial government restructuring decree that would have given the prime minister greater powers. Despite his having been reportedly dismissed for "serious misconduct," Diallo maintains that he continues to have a good relationship with the president. Diallo belongs to the Fulani ethnic group and is from Labe (Middle Guinea).

¶4. (U) Current Prime Minister Souare served under Cellou Diallo as his minister of mines.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) Diallo's announcement does not come as a surprise. Although often coy and guarded about his political agenda in past meetings with Poloff, Diallo's personal ambitions have been increasingly clear. The UFDG has been one of the most active political parties in Guinea over the past year. Diallo has invigorated the party, which has been working to raise its profile in the interior, especially in Middle Guinea, the heartland of the Peuhl ethnic group. In doing so, Diallo's popularity has risen significantly at the expense of Ousmane Bah, leader of the rival Union for Progress and Renewal (UPR) party, which also draws most of its support from the Peuhl ethnic group. END COMMENT.

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